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U. S. Army Military History Institute

The German Attack on the Front of the Sixth Army Group on
January 1, 1945

Jenkins

I. General

The complete defeat of the attack of Army Group G on the northern front of the Sixth Army Group beginning at 2300 hours, December 31, 1944, has led to the impression that this attack was a small spoiling attack for the purpose of preventing troops from this front being moved to reinforce American units engaged in the Battle of the Bulge. This impression was far from the German intention as witnessed by Hitler's speech to his commanders on December 28 and the attached translated copies of orders and messages issued by the German High Command in this operation. The German's intention was: 1., to close the SAVERNE Gap and destroy all American forces east of the Vosges Mountains; 2., to form a junction between the German First Army and the German Nineteenth Army which was then surrounded in the Kolmar Pocket; 3., to launch an offensive in the direction of METZ for the purpose of destroying more American divisions and to relieve the east flank of the Seventh German Army by taking the American Third Army in the rear.

The German High Command believed that the front of the Sixth Army Group was so extended and thinned out by the movement of divisions to reinforce units engaged in the Battle of the Bulge, that a concentrated major attack could pierce this thin line and encircle and destroy the American and French forces east of the Vosges Mountains. The German plan could easily have succeeded had the commander of the Sixth Army Group not been given timely warning and had he not so strenuously prepared to meet this offensive. If this attack had have succeeded and the attack planned for January 10-12 on METZ had have succeeded, the entire right flank of the allied armies would have been exposed and the Third Army which was attacking the southern flank of the Bulge would have had to turn and defend its rear.

II. The Situation in the Sixth Army Group

Beginning about November 10, 1944, the Sixth Army Group had attacked with the Seventh Army in the SAVERNE area and which broke through to the Rhine River at STRASBURG. It had attacked with the First French Army in the BELFORT area and which had broken through to the Rhine River in the vicinity of MULHOUSE. The German Nineteenth Army was thus encircled by these two armies in the KOLMAR area between the Vosges Mountains and the Rhine River. Plans were

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made for the First French Army, with some assistance from the Seventh Army, to complete the defeat of the German Nineteenth Army west of the Rhine. The main body of the Seventh Army was then ordered to attack north where some units, when the attack was stopped as a result of the Battle of the Bulge, had already pierced the West Wall at WISSEMBOURG.

The Seventh Army had captured the MAGINOT throughout its sector except a segment of the line in the vicinity of BITCHE. At this time the Sixth Army Group was directed to go on the defensive, take over a major part of the front which had been occupied by the American Third Army, and release a number of divisions to the Third Army and for the general reserve in the Battle of the Bulge. In the meantime, the First French Army had failed to destroy the Nineteenth German Army encircled in the KOLMAR area. The American VI Corps was deployed to the east of the VOSGES MOUNTAINS along the Rhine River north of STRASBURG and along the general line of the Maginot Line. The American XV Corps was deployed to the west of the VOSGES along the general line of the Maginot Line. Part of the First French Army was on the ALSACE PLAIN east of the VOSGES and south of STRASBOURG. The pocket held by the German Nineteenth Army prevented north and south communication in the ALSACE PLAIN east of the VOSGES MOUNTAINS. The only good road for the supply of American and French troops, east of the VOSGES on the ALSACE PLAIN, was the main road through the SAVERNE GAP.

The German Army up to this time had been in full retreat and showed no intention of even making a strong defensive stand until it reached the line of the VOSGES MOUNTAINS. When the VOSGES line was pierced at the SAVERNE and BELFORT Gaps the German Army retreated to the Rhine River on the east and the West Wall on the north and into the KOLMAR area. It was only when the German Army reached these positions that it showed a tendency to make a strong defense. Up to this time, the question of a major attack or even a counter-attack by the German First and Nineteenth Armies, was not considered an enemy capability. However, with the thinning out of divisions dispatched to reinforce the Bulge, the extension of the line and the failure of the French Army to destroy the German Nineteenth Army in the KOLMAR POCKET, the situation assumed a more serious turn.

G-2 pointed out as early as December 22 that an attack along the west side of the VOSGES MOUNTAINS combined with an attack north-east from the KOLMAR POCKET could close the only line of communication with the troops east of the VOSGES MOUNTAINS and could greatly endanger the American VI Corps and part of the French First Army. At this time the few reconnaissance planes able to get into the air due to bad weather, reported increasing railroad traffic in the HOMBURG area and on the rail lines leading to this area from the Rhine. Planes also reported increasing road movement. Photographic

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coverage disclosed new supply dumps being established, artillery positions being moved forward and greatly increased activity in this area. Mobile units, such as the 17th SS Panzer Grenadier, 21st Panzer and the 25th Panzer Grenadier Divisions were pulled out of the line for possible refitting. PWs told of new replacements arriving to fill depleted units. The enemy assumed a more aggressive attitude and was quick to occupy the ground relinquished by the American forces. Information was obtained of the hurried sending of tank crews to the interior to bring tanks and assault guns to the front.

These activities and information caused the G-2 to warn the Army Group Commander on the morning of December 23 that an attack was imminent on the Seventh Army front in the vicinity of HOMBURG. On the night of December 24, at a conference in PFALZBURG, the advanced CP of the Sixth Army Group, the Sixth Army Group G-2 briefed the Commanding General of the Seventh Army and his staff on this situation. At a later conference on the same night at SAVERNE, the CP of the Seventh Army, the Sixth Army Group G-2 stated that the Germans would attack with five or more divisions in the direction of HOMBURG-SAARSBURG between January 1st and 3rd. The G-2 also pointed out that the only segment of the Maginot Line not in American hands was that in the area of BITCHE and that an attack, if made, would most likely come in this area.

In the Weekly Intelligence Summary No. 15, dated 30 December 1944, enemy capabilities are stated as follows:

"c. Capabilities.

The following capabilities remain open to the enemy:

1. Attack on the axis HOMBURG-SARREBOURG with present forces augmented by an estimated three to five low calibre divisions.

Discussion;

Capability 1 is favored. The aggressive defense, as discussed above, the build up in the area, the heavy rail activity, the time elapsed permitting refitting, and the total number of troops definitely make it possible. The strategic advantages of forcing the commitment of the Seventh Army's forces at this time when the enemy cannot risk weakening his own front further by sending troops to the RIFEL sector are apparent. Should the enemy succeed in reaching SARREBOURG, the withdrawal of Allied forces from hard won territory between the VOSGES and the RHINE north of STRASSBOURG might become necessary. The morale factor alone in such an eventuality would be considerable for the enemy, without considering the delay to the Allied plans for advancing into Germany.

2. A rapid shift of forces from north to south within the VOSGES pocket for attack on the axis MULHOUSE-BELFORT, reinforcements being available from the Black Forest.

Discussion;

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Capability 2 would be executed only in conjunction with capability 1, and at the period when the main attack in the SAAR area had progressed to a noticeable extent. The purpose in this case would be to force employment of all possible Allied reinforcements in the VOSGES thereby preventing their use in the SAAR area.

3. A limited attack across the RHINE with STRASBOURG as the objective.

Discussion.

Capability 3 is considered in the same light as capability 2.

4. Aggressive defense along the entire Sixth US Army Group front, using the reserves for commitment on the EIFEL sector.

Discussion.

Capability 4 is not favored. The risk that the Allies might release troops from this front to reinforce the EIFEL counter-attack will force the enemy to take aggressive action against the Seventh Army. Furthermore, for the reasons given in capability 1 above, the enemy cannot remain inactive in this area."

The First German Army attacked as predicted in the BITCHE-HOMBURG area at 2300 hours, December 31, 1944.

III. The German Situation

Inclosure one shows the German Order of Battle as of December 30, 1944, as taken from the captured situation maps of German First and Nineteenth Armies.

On December 15, 1944, CinC West informed Army Group G of the coming attack in the north to be conducted by Army Group B with a goal of destroying our forces north of the line, ANTWERP-BRUSSELS-BASTOGNE. Army Group G was given the mission of pinning down the maximum possible enemy forces through harassing operations. (Incl. 2).

On 21 December, Rundstedt wired Army Group G of the obvious weakening of enemy forces on its front and of the possibility therefore of an attack by Army Group G.

On 24 December, the plans for the attack of Army Group G were completed, to block the VOSGES roads at SAVIERNE and re-gain the SAAR coal area. Forces for the attack were to include a heavy tank battalion and 2 flame thrower companies. Simultaneous activity of 19th Army was to pin down the maximum enemy forces. (Incl. 3).

On 25 December, Rundstedt named the operation "North Wind" and specified a code to designate the final date of operation. (Incl. 4).

On 26 December, CinC West informed Army Group G of Hitler's personal

interest and of the vital necessity of blocking SAVERNE. In the meantime, troops for operating in that rough terrain were especially provided and pursuit troops were organized to mop up the presumably routed enemy forces. (Incl. 5).

Army Group G repeated these instructions to First Army with further details. Throughout, the personal interest and personal direction of Hitler was evident, including even minor secondary attacks. (Incl. 6).

On 28 December, the withdrawal of American forces from in front of Army Group G was so evident that operation "North Wind" was set for 31 December at 2300 hours. This included plans for a complete breakthrough to unite with the KOLMAR pocket. (Incl. 7).

In a speech to division commanders on 28 December, Hitler mentions the thinning out of American divisions and the importance of SAVERNE in the annihilation of the American divisions in the upper RHINE plains. (Incl. 8).

Inclosure nine is the translation of an order from Cinc West to Chief of Staff, Army Group G, for a second attack which was to be launched dependent upon the success of the attack at 2300 hours, 31 December. This order was accomplished by a marked map which showed the plan of the attack. One attack group under command of the LXXXII Corps, consisting of the 347th Division, the Sixth SS Mountain Division and a division from the Fifteenth Army, was to attack east from the FORBACH area on METZ. This attack was to be supported by the Herman Goering Panzer Division whose mission was to exploit as soon as a breakthrough had been accomplished. The second attack group, attacking from the SAARBURG area (west of LUXEMBOURG) south in the direction of METZ with the mission of encircling and capturing METZ and siezing the crossing of the MOSSELLE RIVER. This attack force was under command of XXXIX Panzer Corps. It consisted of the 416th, the 716th divisions and a paratroop division, which were to make the initial attack. It was supported by the 11th Panzer Division and the 10th SS Panzer Division whose missions were to exploit the breakthrough. The plan was to launch the attack on METZ between 10 and 15 of January depending on the success of the first attack.

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**Enemy Situation on the Sixth Army Group Front as Shown on
Captured Situation Maps of German Army Group G and the
German First and Nineteenth Armies as of
December 30, 1944**

The Sixth Army Group occupied the line of the Rhine River, with the exception of the KOLMAR pocket, from the Swiss border to the junction of the Maginot Line and the Rhine River at LAUTERBERG. To the north, units of the Sixth Army Group occupied a general line south of the West Wall from the Rhine River east to the vicinity of SAARLAUTERN. American units were in possession of the Maginot Line with exception of a small segment around BITCHE which had not yet been captured. On the Rhine front the Sixth Army Group was faced by the Nineteenth German Army with headquarters at GERBWEILER in the KOLMAR pocket. Low grade static units such as fortress battalions, etc., apparently defended the remainder of the Rhine line. It is believed that the Nineteenth German Army and the defense of the Rhine line was the responsibility of the Army Group Upper Rhine which was supposed to be commanded by Himmler. The northern front from the Rhine River as far east as the Moselle was under command of Army Group G with headquarters at WACHENHEIM. This part of the line was held by troops of the First German Army with headquarters at RAMSTEIN just north of LANDSTEIN. A forward command post of Army Group G was located in this vicinity.

The following table shows the order of battle of the German First Army on December 30, 1944, as taken from the captured situation maps of this date of the German First Army in comparison with the G-2 situation report, Sixth Army Group of this date.

Data from Captured Situation Map of First German Army dated December 30, 1944			Data from Weekly G-2 Report of Sixth Army Group dated December 30, 1944		
ARMY	CORPS	DIVISION	DIVISION	CORPS	ARMY
		245	256		
	LXXXIX	256	245	LXXXIX	
		361	361		

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ARMY	CORPS	DIVISION	DIVISION	CORPS	ARMY
	XC	257	257		
FIRST		19	19	XIII PZ	FIRST
	XIII PZ	36	17 SS PG		
ARMY		17 SS PG	347		ARMY
		347	36		
ARMY GROUP		21 PZ	21 PZ	ARMY OR ARMY	
RESERVE		25 PG	25 PG	GROUP RESERVE	

NOTE: The 559th Division moved from the TRIER area on the night of December 25-26 and was placed in line between the 361st and 257th Divisions just prior to the attack on December 31, 1944.

THE RHINE FRONT

On the Rhine front the German Nineteenth Army occupied a segment to the east of the Rhine River along the general line ERSTEIM--SELESTAT--GERADMER--THANN--MULHOUSE. The Siegfried Line from the southern end of the KOIMAR pocket along the Rhine River to the Swiss border was held by static fortress units under control of the 415th Training Division. To the north of the pocket the Siegfried Line along the Rhine was held by similar units under control of the 405th Training Division.

The last available captured map of the German Nineteenth Army was dated 30 November 1944. However, the situation on the front of the Nineteenth Army during the period between 30 November 1944 and 30 December 1944, was stable and it is doubtful if there were many changes of units on this front during that period. The table below shows a comparison between the German order of battle as shown on the last available captured map of the German Nineteenth Army as compared with the Sixth Army Group G-2 Report dated December 30, 1944.

Data from Captured Situation
Map of German 19th Army dated
November 30, 1944

Data from Sixth Army Group
Weekly G-2 Report dated
December 30, 1944

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ARMY	CORPS	DIVISION	DIVISION	CORPS	ARMY
	LXIV	198 708 716 106 PZ Brig.	198 716(?) 708 106 PZ Brig(?)	LXIV	
19th Army	XC	16 269	189 16 269	XC	19th Army
	LXIII	159 189 338 Brig. Hafner	159 338 Brig. Hafner	LXIII	

NOTE: The 189th Division was identified by PW in the XC Corps area on December 21. It is probable that this division moved north during the period between November 30--December 30, 1944 since on the G-2 Report, Sixth Army Group, dated December 2, 1944, it was shown in the south under LXIII Corps.

15 December 1944

High Commander West

TO: CG of Army Group "G".

1. On 16 December 1944, approximately at 0530 hours, Army Group "B" begins a wide scale attack on the front between MONCHAU and ECHTERNACH.

2. Goal of the Operation is the quickest possible destruction of the enemy north of the line ANTWERP-BRUSSELS-BASTOGNE.

3. The mission of Army Group "G", during this operation, is to use all its forces to prevent the enemy on his part from penetrating the front of the First Army and thus gaining the possibility of a counter operation and destruction of the rear area communication of Army Group "B".

4. Army Group "G" must in addition pin down the maximum possible of the enemies strength on the front of the First Army through continuing harassing operations.

5. The sharpest observation of all enemy movement behind the enemy front! It is important immediately to establish whether and where the enemy is withdrawing any forces. The quickest report of that type of preparation is urgent. In this case, upon my order only, will certain prepared Army troops and combat teams be released from the front of Army Group "G" and transported to front of Army Group "B". Army Group "G" is responsible that these movements are carried through immediately with the greatest possible acceleration.

6. With the left wing of the 7th Army constant closest contact will be maintained. As soon as the retreating movement of the enemy is recognized, you will immediately push forward after him in order to gain ground.

7. Further orders according to the development of the situation.

Von Rundstedt
Field Marshal
The High Command West

Incl. 2

24 December 1944

Planned conduct of the attack operation of Army Group "G" against lower Alsace.

1. O-Day (beginning of attack) 1 January 1945. Whether it will open by artillery concentration at entering the point of main thrust or whether shortly after that entry into the area for break-through will be determined later.

2. K-Day (beginning of the forewarning) 26 December 1944. Both dates may be transposed but the planned O-Day will be moved forward only upon specific grounds. (Sylvester night)

3. Two thrusts -

a. Main attack with the majority of the attack forces from the area east of BITSCH. First objective: reaching the line ENCHENBERG-SARREINSBERG-WINGEN-WILMENAU-ROTHBACH-ZINSWILLER-HASENBERG.

from this line forward;

(aa) In cooperation with the second thrust group gaining the area around ROETHBACH.

(bb) Concerted thrust forward in and west of the VOSGES in the area of PFALZBURG.

(cc) Blocking of the escape routes of the VOSGES roads to include SAVERNE.

b. Secondary attack - east of the BLIES in a southerly direction toward ROETHBACH.

Leadership of the combined attack - Headquarters First Army. For the attack, Lt. Gen. (Armored) West, with a small staff, will be attached to the First Army in order to assist as Armored consultant to exploit the main attack.

For a., above -

Forces for the main attack -

Staff XC Corps
Staff LXXXIX Corps
559 VG Div (Battle Group)
361 VG Div (Battle Group)
36 VG Div
256 VG Div
21 PZ Div
Volks-Werfer-Brig 20

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For b., above -

Staff XIII SS Corps

Forces for secondary attack -

257 VG Div

17 SS PZ Gren Div

Volks Artillery Corps 404

653 Heavy Tank Bn. (Royal Tiger) and 2 Flame Thrower Tank Companies

c. Assembly area of the 25th PZ Gren Div such that after the development of the situation it can be pushed out behind either of the two attack groups.

4. Employment of forces (See map)

5. Objective of operation is to cut off the greatest portion of enemy strength in lower Alsace from its rearward communications and simultaneously to attack and destroy the enemy situated west of the Vosges between present front and the area west of PFALZBURG and as a final goal establish communication with the north front of the Nineteenth Army.

In this the participation of the Army Group Over Rhine will be as follows:

a. Simultaneously with the beginning of the attack of Army Group "G" to develop with strong assault troops the bridge head on the Rhine north of STRASSBURG to the widest front possible.

b. Twenty-four hours after the beginning of the attack of Army Group "G" strong pinning down limited objective thrusts on the north and northwest front of the Nineteenth Army.

c. Inconspicuous preparation of all available battleworthy troops of Army Group Over Rhine in order to continuously develop the expected success of attacks of Army Group "G" for the reinforcement of the 19th Army to carry through further exploits of the existing situation. The 19th Army will be placed under command of Army Group G at a date to be specified by C in C West.

6. Independent of this but simultaneous with the attack of the First Army, there will be strong attacks by assault troops to gain ground in the ORSCHOLZ-RIEGEL-SAAR front on a broad front under the leadership of Army Group "G" directly to the LXXXII Corps. Final objective, the line CONTZ-WALNIESE, and the heights of the SAAR.

7. Provisionally, the Commander in Chief West holds as his reserve for a successful development, the 7th Parachute Division in the area GILDERN-KEMPFEN. Its control will go either to Army Group "G" or to 25th Army, depending on the development of the situation.

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25 December 1944

SUBJECT: Plans for Army Group "G"

TO: Army Group "G"
Chief of General Staff

INFORMATION COPY TO: Army Group Over-Rhine
Lt. Gen. West (1st Lt. Adomeit)
Lt. Gen. Stumpff
Quartermaster C&C West (Col. John)
Artillery Commanders C&C West (Maj. Gen.
Meyer-Buerdorf)

1. Cover name for the operation is "North Wind."
2. As designation of dates the following will be established:

26 December = K-Day
27 December = F-Day
28 December = J-Day
29 December = R-Day
30 December = U-Day
31 December = C-Day
1 January 1945 = O-Day (Anticipated day of attack).

From then on O+1, O+2, etc., = 2, 3, 4, January, etc. For instance, O+1 or O+3 would mean that the attack has been postponed until the 2nd or 4th of January.

3. K-Day (26 December) is the day of forewarning. From this point of time on, preparations for O-Day are dated. If the O-Day is postponed until +1, +2, +3, etc., then the day of warning may also be postponed. In this case there will be announced K-Day = K+1, K+2, etc. (or 27, 28, 29, etc. December 1944). The participation of Army Group Over-Rhine is to be indicated with the code name "Tausiehn."

5. Further, for the day and time codes, the code table of the "High Command" for December 44-January 45 apply.

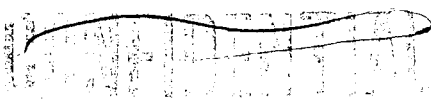
6. The strictest concealment in all speech is once more urged.

FOR THE HIGH COMMANDER WEST:

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Incl. 4

The control of the 6th SS Mountain Division will go at a later date to be specified, to Army Group "G" when this Division appears especially necessary for the further development of the situation.



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26 December 1944

SUBJECT: Cinc West

TO: Army Group "G".

1. I am in accord with the objectives of the operation. Army Group "G" must maintain constant closest communication with Army Group Over Rhine in order to make all necessary timely preparations for the later restoration of union with the Nineteenth Army. I ask that you keep me constantly informed on that situation.

2. The Fuhrer orders the attack of the right assault group to be so conducted that it quickly reaches the road between PFALZBURG and SAVERNE. This is as much against the SAAR (district SAARALBEN-SAARBURG) as is an effort to block SAVERNE. It is to be noted herein that the right wing of the 13th SS Army Corps will be employed toward the west along the BLIES near BLIESBRUCK in order to move from there through WOELFELING toward ROHRBACH to secure the main road which runs from there to the south. On this basis in addition to the 25th PZ Grenadier Division likewise the 21st PZ Division must be taken as Army reserves. The assembly area of the 21st PZ Division is accordingly to be placed so toward the north that the division can push southward by passing the ROHRBACH installations.

3. Attachments of Units.

4. Artillery Coordination.

5. The Fuhrer wishes that coordination (radio communication ?) with Army Group Over Rhine will not commence before at least 48 hours after the beginning of the attack. Army Group Over Rhine will continue to receive verbal instructions through high command.

6. The diversionary attack in the ORCHOLZ-RIEGEL area has been cancelled by the Fuhrer. It is to take place in another location. Information on this will follow.

7. The employment of a combat group of the 6th SS Mountain Division is to be planned so that it can push strong groups through the more mountainous regions of the attack area.

8. Attachments of combat groups.

9. Army Group "G" will accelerate the preparation of new plans

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Incl. 5

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also for the two small pursuit groups which will follow closely after the 13th SS Corps as provided in paragraph 2 above.

(sgd) von Rundstedt

Commander in Chief West

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27 December 1944

SUBJECT: Army Group "G"

2000 hours

TO: CG, First Army

1. The Fuhrer orders the attack of the Right Attack Group to be so led that it reaches the main road between PFALZBURG and SAVERNE quickly. This will complete the relief of the SAAR (SAARALB-SAARBURG) as well as block SAVERNE.

It will be noted therein that the right flank of the 13th SS Corps will be employed toward the West along the BLIES at BLIESBRUCK in order to operate through WOLFLING, to gain the main road which leads from ROHRBACH southward.

2. Herein will be ordered the following changes in the order:

a. To the first attack group are attached;

Volks Artillery Corps 410 and Werfer Brigade 7.

b. The attachment of the 21st Armored Division to the second attack group is still uncompleted. The 21st Armored Division is to prepare itself in the area southeast of Zweibrucken in such a way that the Division, after a successful breakthrough, can by-pass the ROHRBACH installations and push toward the south together with the 25th Panzer Grenadier Division, whose assembly area is to be shifted correspondingly to the West. The first attack group can pull both Divisions behind the second attack group on the line INGWILER-NIEDERBRONN when a thrust in the direction of HAGENAU is under consideration. Both Divisions are Army Group reserves.

c. The organization of flank protection against the SAAR is especially to be prepared. Here consideration should be given to the enveloping movement of the 36th VG Division, in cooperation with part of the 17th SS PZ Grenadier Division, and a defense group composed of Army Engineer Battalion 669 and a grenadier battalion, from a Division not yet committed.

d. (Artillery)

e. The diversionary attack in the ORSCHALZ-RIEGEL area has been changed by the Fuhrer. Likewise, the ordered coordinating attack in battalion strength will be postponed pending a secondary attack to divert the enemy east of FORBACH. Information on this matter will be reported from the Army High Command.

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Incl. 6

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f. The combat team of the Sixth SS Mountain Division is to be so committed that it will fully exploit the mountainous country, with an exceptional pressure which will envelop and break through the enemy situated on the roads and thus advance the general attack.

g. (Radio Silence)

BLASKOWITZ

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28 December 1944

Chief of the General Staff, Cinc West (information copy, Army Group G)
1 copy

Reference High Command Over-Rhine, it is ordered:

"The withdrawal of forces of the enemy in front of Army Group "G" continuous on a large scale. Der Fuehrer has, therefore, set the beginning of operation "North Wind" for 31 December, 2300 hours."

Mission of Army Group Over-Rhine is in the course of the operations north of STRASSBURG to breakthrough the enemy Rhine front and to seek union with our own forces pushing eastward from the Vosges in the area HAGENAU-BRUMATH.

Launching the Attack:--first when friendly armored spearheads has reached the eastern exit of the Vosges in the area INCWEILER-SAVERNE.

Time element will be ordered through high command. Preparation must be so made that the attack can be launched 24 hours after the order has been issued.

ZIMMERMAN
Maj. Gen.

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Incl. 7

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Extracts from Hitler's speech to Division Commanders, 28 December 1944,
at the ADLARHORST

Gentlemen, I have asked you to come here before an action on the successful conclusion of which further blows in the West will depend In the military sense, it is important that in the West we are changing over from this unfruitful defensive to the offensive. This offensive alone can really give this war in the West a successful turn. In the sector in which we will attack now an extraordinary thinning out has taken place. (The enemy) . . . has pulled out Division after Division so that we have to hurry if we want to destroy a goodly number of Divisions. Perhaps there are only three left, perhaps four, if we are lucky there will be five, hardly six any more.

. . . The success of this operation will lead to destruction of a part of the group of Divisions which still face us south of the break through point (Ardennes). The next operation will follow at once. There will be a further push. I hope this way to smash those American units that are located to the South then we will extend that advance further and will try to tie it in with a large scale operation. The second attack then has a very clear objective; namely, the destruction of the enemy forces Our forces certainly are not limitless. It was taking a terrific chance to mobilize the forces for this and the coming blows. Gentlemen, here, today speed is everything. If we permit the enemy to collect his wits then half of the chances that we do have are gone. I believe that this is one of the deciding factors for the success of this operation. On the whole, the plan for the operation is clear. I approve fully of the measures that have been taken. I hope that we will succeed, especially to push the right wing ahead first, to open the roads to SAVERNE, then push at once into the Rhine Plains and to liquidate the American Divisions. The goal must be the annihilation of these American Divisions If we succeed in annihilating these two American groups in two blows, the strength ratio . . . will have shifted absolutely in our hand.

This . . . is a decisive operation. The success of it will automatically insure the success of the second one.

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31 Dec 1944, Chief of General Staff, C & C West. ~~Enclosure #1 (Map)~~

TO: Chief of General Staff of Army Group G, Major General Stadtko.

The Fuhrer has specified an immediate prepared further attack on the right wing of Army Group G.

The following range of ideas and intentions for the use of forces will be taken as general principle:

Herein it is especially to be taken into consideration that the attack groups of the CG LXXXII Army Corps shown on the (attached) map are to be thrust down from the vicinity of FORBACH only when the attack on the vicinity of BITSCH has not obtained the desired success.

When the objective of the attacks in the Vosges has been obtained, then the anticipated forces under LXXXII Army Corps are to unite with the right attack group (XXXIX) Panzer Corps in a specially strong attack group. In this case, coordination of this attack group with the forces of Army Group G from the direction SAARALB-SAARBURG for the mopping up of the area between SAAR-MOSEL as far as METZ-SAARBURG should be anticipated.

I asked the commanders to especially note -

(1) Objective of the operation; shattering of further enemy forces, release of the south flank of Army Group B, preparation for further operative successes in the area between MOSEL and the VOSGES.

Subsidiary purpose; further pushing back of enemy air bases (fighter and close combat units).

(2) (Summary of forces: 5 Infantry Divisions, etc.)

(3) (Attack front.)

(4) (Summary: Composition of two attack groups.)

(5) Final objective of operation; METZ; Planned development; break-through on narrow front on both flanks of the attack, blocking the MOSEL crossings through flank covering to the right; securing of the left flank next, somewhat on the line ST. AVOLD-FALKENBERG-REMILLY-ARRY (MOSEL).

Encircling in the triangle ORSCHOLZ, METZ-FORBACH, destruction of the (presumed weak) enemy forces situated there. Therein the corner ORSCHOLZ-RIEGEL-CONTZ-ORSCHOLZ will be by-passed

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permitting further thrusts to the south to be made, cleaning up an organization of new front on the MOSEL by combat groups of 416 VG Div.

First tentative objective after the breakthrough:

Maginot Line, whose large works have been abandoned, must be penetrated.

First Objective: quick seizure of METZ, whose possession is only secured when western bridgehead including FORTGUETEL is once more in our hands.

(6) Time Element:

Depends upon the success of the above mentioned thrust by Army Group G from the vicinity of BITSCH, since the success of this attack will give the possibility of a further combined operation with two attacks.

But if the attack from the vicinity of BITSCH fails, which in that case will unite enemy forces and draw new enemy forces, the attack on METZ must take place in order to:

- a. Exploit the tactical displacement.
- b. To draw off further forces from the hard pressed southern flank of Army Group B and thus to provide no interference for Army Group B.
- c. In order to allow the enemy no time.

Time of the attack on METZ then will be between 10-15 January.

(7) On the assumption that the attack of Army Group G from the vicinity of BITSCH makes progress and that it succeeds in defeating the enemy forces in north ALSACE between the VOSGES and the Rhine with the cooperation of Army Group Over-Rhine and at least (succeeds) in reaching the SARTHE cliff then the mutual operative cooperation between the two large attack groups must be prepared for. This operation has as its goal firstly, clearing the enemy from the area between METZ and PFALZBURG and thus insuring the relief of SAARBRUCKEN and the SAAR industrial area. For this contingency we have tightly withheld the great reserve of the right attack group behind your left wing, in order to thrust forward in the general direction of SAARBURG from the area ST. AVOLD-FALKENBURG in the event of any success. A coordinated attack of the eastward attack group over the SAAR from the line SAARALB-SAARBURG in a north western direction will be launched but dependent upon the strength then available.

(8) (Troop preparations)

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- (9) (Reports by Army Group G)
- (10) (Measures for secrecy)
- (11) (Cover name for the operation; "Zahnarzt" (dentist)).

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THE ENEMY SITUATION ON THE FRONT OF THE
SIXTH ARMY GROUP ON NOVEMBER 4, 1944

The German order of battle on the Sixth Army Group front, November 4, 1944, as taken from captured situation map of the German First Army dated 5 November 1944 and the captured situation map of the German Nineteenth Army dated 4 November 1944, is as follows:

The boundary between the two armies was the line Kilstett (just south of Gambsheim)--Wassellonne--Ogweiler--Gerbeviller--Bayon. The Nineteenth Army to the south. Only the southern corps of the First Army was opposed to troops of the Sixth Army Group. This was the LXXXIX Corps. It consisted of two divisions, the 361st Division on the north and the 553rd Division on the south. The northern corps of boundary extended along the line Saurunion--Dieuze--Basserville (southeast of Nancy). The 559th Division of the XIII SS Corps occupied the territory north of the LXXXIX Corps boundary. Headquarters LXXXIX Corps was at Rhoades. Headquarters of the 361st Division was just north of Geracourt and the Headquarters of the 553rd Division was at Saller, northeast of Blamont.

The Nineteenth German Army occupied the Vosges Mountains from the boundary of the First German Army to the Swiss border. Its headquarters was at Gebweiler. It consisted of the LXIV, the IV GAF and the LXXXV Corps in that order from north to south. The LXIV Corps with headquarters at Moussey, consisted of the 21st Panzer Division, the 716th Division and remnants of the 16th Division, in that order from north to south. CP of the 21st Panzer Division was at Celles, of the 716th Division at Moyeremoutier, CP of the 16th Division was west of St. Marguerite. Southern boundary of the LXIV Corps extended along the line Ribeauville--Sauloy--Domfaing--Dinoze. The IV GAF CP was at Gerardmer. It consisted of the 198th and the 269th Divisions. The 198th Division on the north. CP of the 198th Division was at LesKettes, CP of the 269th Division was at Oderen. Southern boundary of the IV GAF Corps extended along the line Kingersheim--Malvaux--Montessau.

The LXXXV Corps CP was located at Belfort. It controlled the territory from the southern boundary of the IV GAF Corps to the Swiss border. It had under it the following divisions in order from north to south: 159th Division with headquarters at Errevet, the 189th Division with headquarters at Champcy, the 338th Division which had taken over those elements formerly known as Battle Group von Oppen, with headquarters at Vieux Charmont. The Corps Dehner with headquarters at Altkirch, controlled the southern boundary from Delle to Basel with battalions Sollner and Stern.

The following table shows a comparison of the actual situation, as taken from captured situation maps of the German First Army dated 5 November 1944 and from the German Nineteenth Army dated 4 November 1944, and the situation as known to the Sixth Army Group G-2 as published in Sixth Army Group Weekly Intelligence Summary Number 7 for week ending 4 November 1944.

Data From Captured German Maps 4 Nov. 1944--5 Nov. 1944			Data From Sixth Army Group G-2 Report 4 November 1944		
ARMY	CORPS	DIVS.	DIVS.	CORPS	ARMY
FIRST ARMY	LXXXIX	361	361	LXXXIX	FIRST ARMY
		553	553		
NINETEENTH ARMY	LXIV	21 Pz	21 Pz	LXIV	NINETEENTH ARMY
		716	716		
		16	16		
	IV G.A.F.	16	Elements	IV G.A.F.	
			338		
		198	198		
		269	269		
LXXXV	159	159	LXXXV		
	189	Brigade			
	338 (?)	von Oppen			

After its disastrous defeat in the lower Rhone Valley, the German 19th Army retreated rapidly to the north. Units became so depleted and so mixed up that the German high command resorted to the device of collecting miscellaneous units together and forming them into battle groups usually giving the group the name of the commander. Thus, the captured situation map of the 19th German Army for the 4th of October 1944, shows the Belfort Sector defended by Battle Group von Oppen, Battle Group Degener and the 159th Division in order from south to

north. In addition, there were in the battle area several fortress battalions and other similar low grade units. At this time the 189th Division, consisting of only one regiment, was in the line to the east of Remiremont. The 338th Division was occupying the line to the south of the 189th. At this time the 189th Division was under the LXIV Corps and the 338th was under the IV GAF Corps.

The captured situation map of the German Nineteenth Army for the 9th of October 1944, shows that the 189th Division has taken over the sector of the Belfort area formerly held by Battle Group Degener. Battle Group Degener was composed of the 1000th Motorized Regiment, Regiment Junge and Regiment Menke. The situation map of the 9th of October 1944, shows that the 189th Division had taken over these same units indicating that the 189th staff had simply arrived in this area and had taken over the troops which were formerly controlled by Battle Group Degener.

The situation map of the German Nineteenth Army for the 4th of November 1944, has the symbol for the 338th Division with a question mark behind it located in Vieux Charmont where the headquarters of Battle Group von Oppen had been located on the map of the 9th of October. This indicates that the staff of the 338th Division had or would soon arrive in the area to take over command of the troops formerly controlled by Battle Group von Oppen. Since the smaller units in contact did not change with this change of command, it was not until the 18th of November that the Sixth Army Group G-2 Section determined this change of command. This change was reported in the Sixth Army Group intelligence report for 18 November 1944. Hence, with the exception of this change of command which took place in the Belfort area, i.e., the substitution of the staffs of the 189th Division and 338th Division to control the troops formerly commanded by Battle Group von Oppen, the Sixth Army Group G-2 intelligence report for 4 November 1944 was absolutely identical with the captured German situation maps for the 1st and the 19th German Armies on the dates of the 5th and 4th of November 1944, respectively.

The following discussion of enemy units on the front of the Sixth Army Group is taken from the Sixth Army Group Weekly Intelligence Summary Number 7 for the week ending 4 November 1944:

1. GENERAL SUMMARY

It is accepted that Fifth Panzer Army has been transferred to another area of the Western Front, and that a common boundary between First and Nineteenth Army has been reestablished. The substitution of Infantry Divisions for mobile units has continued, climaxed by the appearance on the front of the 269 Infantry Division. A considerable regrouping of enemy forces was accomplished and Battle Group formations reappeared in the most threatened sector (ST DIE

area), suggesting that by reason of our consecutive attacks the enemy is finding his stock pile of reserves dwindling.

2. SIXTH ARMY GROUP FRONT (Vosges Zone)

At the close of the period the First and Nineteenth Army forces were generally disposed on a line:

XURES (Q 2010), LEINTREY (Q 2603), MIGNEVILLE (V 2992), VACQUEVILLE (V 3187), THIAVILLE (V 3179), LA SALLE (V 3269), West of ST DIE (V 3966) LA HOUSIERE (V 3455), LA CHAPELLE (V 2954), LE THOLY (V 2643), CORNIMONT (V 3329), LE THILLOT (K 3029), RONCHAMP (K 2208), MIGNAVILLERS (P 2795), LONGEVILLE-SUR-DOUBS (P 2681), VILLER LES BLAMONT (A 3564).

a. Changes in the disposition of Armies and Corps:

There are strong indications that the enemy has made considerable changes in the disposition of his higher headquarters. The XLVII Panzer Corps has not been located for some time and there is no evidence that the LVIII Panzer Corps has responsibility in the Northern Sector. It is accepted that the Fifth Panzer Army has also left the Southwestern portion of the front, probably entrusted with a new mission elsewhere.

Evidently a new Corps has taken over the XLVII Corps sector and possibly that of the LVIII Panzer Corps. Indications are that the LXXXIX Corps is the candidate. This new alignment of Corps naturally establishes a common boundary between the First and Nineteenth Armies. The location of such a boundary is still unknown.

The LXIV Reserve, the IV GAF and LXXXV Corps remain in line, although the transfer of the Headquarters LXXXV Corps from BELFORT to DIEFMATTEN (V 5300) (Northeast of BELFORT) presupposes that another headquarters, possibly on Corps level, may have been established in BELFORT, with responsibility for that fortified area.

b. FIRST ARMY

The reported location of Headquarters First Army in ST AVOLD (Q 2557) suggests that the army assumes responsibility for a sector including the area north of BLAMONT, with the 361 VOLKSGRENADIER and the 553 Infantry Divisions as the southernmost Divisions possibly under LXXXIX Corps.

(1) (?) LXXXIX Corps:

The 361 VOLKSGRENADIER Division, converted early in September from the 596 VOLKSGRENADIER Division, arrived on the south-

western front from HOLLAND about 18 October, where it underwent additional training and organization.

The personnel of the Division consists mainly of 17-18 year olds, interspersed with older re-inducted men. It is reported that the morale of this unit is rather low.

Elements of the 952 Volks GR were identified in US XV Corps Zone on October 3, while elements of the 953 Volks GR were identified further North of US XII Corps Zone. The third regiment of the division (951 Volks GR) remains unlocated.

The 553 Infantry Division committed in early September in US XII Corps Zone, was badly mauled at the beginning of October. Since then the division received at the end of October replacements with little training. All three regiments of the division (1119, 1120, and 1121 GRs) have been identified since October 30 in US XV Corps Zone (BLAMONT area). As the regiments of the 553 and 361 Divisions are sandwiched, the delineation of the boundary between the two divisions remains obscure.

c. NINETEENTH ARMY

(1) LXIV Reserve Corps:

In view of the general regrouping of the enemy's forces, the present location of the 21 Panzer Division (BACCARAT area) presupposes that it is at least momentarily under LXIV Reserve Corps.

The 21 Panzer Division was heavily committed astride the boundary of US XV and VI Corps Zone (BACCARAT area).

The heavy losses sustained by the division in the fight around BACCARAT require replacements. PW's stated that the I Battalion of the 22 Panzer Regiment is refitting in DUNTZENHEIM (Northwest of STRASBOURG). (The 22 Panzer Regiment was identified in the 21 Panzer Division sector on October 25 and 26. It appears that the 22 Panzer Regiment is now with 21 Panzer Division substituting for the organic 5 Panzer Regiment, which has not been identified since August).

Considering, however, the enemy's general trend in withdrawing mobile units (especially from the VOSGES front) for general refitting, a possible withdrawal of the 21 Panzer Division should be considered, provided that a substitute can be found (possible another division from NORWAY or a mountain division from the Twentieth Mountain Army).

716 Infantry Division, withdrawn from its old sector, has been interspersed between the 21 Panzer Division and elements of

of the 338 Infantry Division, also withdrawn from its old sector and thrown piecemeal in the battle around ST DIE. So far, the I/726 GR, I/736 GR and IV Ost Battalion 726 GR, of the 716 Infantry Division, were identified in the new sector. Both Divisions (716 and 338) were badly shaken and their combat efficiency is low.

It is difficult at this stage to picture the organization of the sector opposing US 3rd Division Zone.

Organic and some of the attached elements of the 338 Infantry Division (757 GR, II and III/933 GR, 291 and 292 zbV Battalions) are operating as BG's, supported by BG's hastily organized from remnants of the 16th Infantry Division (BG GRIMM, 201 and 202 Mountain Battalions, II/2112 PGR, 49 Fortress Battalion, 437 Replacement Battalion). In addition, BG ESCHERICH and 602 Mobile Battalion, (which absorbed 608 Mobile Battalion) were also identified in this sector.

The present situation of BG ROLLIN remains obscure. It is reported that Col. Rollin is in command of 933 GR, identified in the northern sector, while none of the other units of his BG were identified in that area.

(2) IV GAF Corps:

198 Infantry Division sidestepped south, assuming responsibility for the sector of the withdrawn 189 Infantry Division, (according to PW statement, the effectives of the Division dwindled down to 600).

It is probable that its third regiment (308 GR) until lately operating under 338 Infantry Division, has returned to the 198 Infantry Division (identified on November 3 (V 3359). 269 Infantry Division (some elements previously attached to the 338 Infantry Division probably still remain in the sector, namely: 1039 Fortress, 40 Fortress, 1433 Fortress, 807 Fortress, 808 Fortress Battalions, 404 Engineer, 746 Engineer Battalions, II Battalions and III Battalions C/V) opposes the French 3 DIA and a portion of the French 1 DMI. In the present alignment of enemy units the 269 Infantry Division constitutes the best tactical unit on the VOSGES front. Since only four battalions, (including the Fusiliers) have been committed so far, the division has at its disposal a relatively large number of reserves (about 4000 combat effectives).

(3) LXXXV Corps:

No change in disposition. The 159 Infantry Division and the Brigade von Oppen remain responsible for the sector opposing the center (portion of the French II Corps) and right flank (French I Corps) of the French First Army.

d. GENERAL RESERVE

It is accepted that the enemy has at his disposal west of the RHINE the following units which should be considered as General Reserve; I GAF Training Division, 19th Army Security Division, 30 SS Division and about ten Fortress Battalions.

In addition to these units, it is estimated that about 10,000 reserves would be quickly available from WEHRKREIS V and other sources. Current enemy replacements and reserves are composed mainly of poorly trained personnel with poor equipment. The units in the General Army reserve are equivalent to approximately one U. S. Infantry Division in number of combat effectives, but are very low in fire power and morale. Possibly their only role would be in defense of well-prepared positions, backing up units in the line.